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THE FORMATION OF THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY

What to do with the Negro population has almost always been a question before the American people. Since the early date of 1714 its removal to some territory beyond the limits of the United States or to an unsettled area of our public lands has been advocated. During the century which followed the earliest mention of deportation, its advocates published their plans as individual propaganda, sought the approbation of religious and humanitarian organizations, and in one or two instances tried to secure favorable State or national action on them. But throughout this long period of one hundred years no concerted action was taken: the period is characterized by sporadic origins and isolated efforts; and these early projectors of plans to remove the Negro were the trailmakers in a pioneering movement which culminated in a national organization.¹

Obviously private enterprise alone could make little headway in the actual colonization of the Negroes in a territory sufficiently distant to be beyond the pale of the white population. The one item of expense was too serious a handicap for individual initiative to overcome. Besides the case of Captain Izard Bacon of Virginia, who temporarily

¹ For an extended account of the plans proposed before 1816, for removing the colored population, see H. N. Sherwood, "Early Negro Deportation Projects," in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, II, 485 ff.

removed his fifty-two freedmen to Pennsylvania to await a favorable time for sending them over sea,² and of Mary Matthews of King George's County, Virginia, who by will emancipated her slaves and provided for their removal to a place where they could enjoy their liberty,³ there is but one significant example of actual colonization under individual auspices. This occurred in 1815 when Paul Cuffe took thirty-eight Negroes to the western coast of Africa.⁴ This dramatic event in Negro deportation, owing to the wide publicity given to it, stimulated activity anew in colonization ventures.

We shall now review these new schemes and show how representatives of the transportation movement assembled in Washington city, and having enlisted in their cause men most distinguished in the councils of the nation, formed the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States, an organization still in existence but now known as the American Colonization Society and having as a monument to its checkered career, the free Negro republic, Liberia, on the western coast of Africa.

To begin with, it is well to point out that Thomas Jefferson, whose advocacy of Negro colonization dates from 1773, replied in 1811, to a request for his opinion on Ann Mifflin's proposition to make a settlement of colored people on the west coast of Africa under the auspices of the different States, that he considered it "the most desirable measure which could be adopted for gradually drawing off" the black population; and he added: "nothing is more to be wished than that the United States should themselves undertake to make such an establishment on the coast of Africa."⁵ It requires little effort to appreciate the weight of this Ex-

² *Niles' Register*, XVII, 30. Some of the slaves of James Smith, a Methodist preacher of Virginia, had accompanied their quondam master to Ohio in 1798. Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society, Publications, XVI, 348-352.

³ *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, II, 161, 162.

⁴ This story has been told by the writer, "Paul Cuffe and his Contribution to the American Colonization Society," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Society, Proceedings*, VI, 370-402.

⁵ Thomas Jefferson, *Writings* (Ford ed., New York, 1892-1899).

President's opinion, and colonizationists later gave wide publicity to it in order to strengthen their cause.⁶

Additional deportation sentiment is found in the recommendations of the Union Humane Society, an anti-slavery organization founded in 1815, in Ohio, by Benjamin Lundy. Two planks in the program of the Society are noteworthy: first, it emphasized the necessity of common action by all forces interested in the amelioration of the Negro race; and, second, it recommended as a basis for common action the removal of the Negroes beyond the pale of the white man.⁷

While the Union Humane Society was silent on national aid, the Kentucky Colonization Society came out in strong terms for it. Taking advantage of the close of the War of 1812 and of the existence of vast tracts of unappropriated lands in the United States, and realizing that the number of free blacks daily increased, and that the territory open to them for residence was greatly restricted owing to the prohibitory legislation existing in many States, this Society, at its annual meeting, held in Frankfort, October 18 and 19, 1815, petitioned Congress that a suitable territory "be laid off as an asylum for all those negroes and mulattoes who have been, and those who may hereafter be, emancipated within the United States; and that such donations, allowances, encouragements, and assistance be afforded them as may be necessary for carrying them thither and settling them therein; and that they be under such regulations and government in all respects as your wisdom shall direct."⁸

Another manifestation of sentiment for removing the Negroes to a distant territory is found in a series of resolutions passed by the Virginia Assembly on December 21, 1816. These resolutions were introduced and sponsored by

⁶ American Colonization Society, First Annual Report (Washington, 1817), 6, 7.

⁷ "The Life of Benjamin Lundy" (Philadelphia, 1847), 16. The manuscript record is in the archives of the Ohio Historical and Philosophical Society.

⁸ American State Papers, Miscellaneous, II, 278, 279. The Petition reached Congress January 18, 1816. It was referred to the Committee on the Public Lands and reported on adversely. *Annals of Congress*, 14th Cong., 1st session, 691.

Charles Fenton Mercer, a slaveholder. In the spring of 1816, he accidentally discovered the secret action of the Assembly, taken in 1800, just after the Negro insurrection of that year, the upshot of which was two resolutions directing the Governor to correspond with the President of the United States for the purpose of securing somewhere a suitable territory for the colonization of emancipated slaves and free Negroes.⁹ It was too near the end of the session when Mercer found these resolutions for him to present a program to the Assembly. In the interim, however, Mercer broke the bar of secrecy, interviewed Francis S. Key, of Georgetown, and Elias B. Caldwell, of Washington city, and with their advice drew up some resolutions to introduce in the Assembly at its next session. Moreover, while in the North that summer for the purpose of the recuperation of his health, having made known his plan, he received "promises of pecuniary aid, and of active cooperation."¹⁰ At the next session of the Virginia Assembly, Mercer introduced his resolutions, the purport of which asked the national government to find a territory on the North Pacific on which to settle free blacks and those afterwards emancipated in Virginia. These resolutions having been amended by the Senate to read on the North Pacific or the African Coast were passed by the Assembly on December 21, 1816, the very day on which the first public meeting of deportationists was held in Washington and out of which grew the American Colonization Society.

A year later, speaking before this organization, Mercer stated his reasons for supporting deportation. "Many thousand individuals in our native State, you well know Mr. President, are restrained from manumitting their slaves, as you and I are, by the melancholy conviction that they cannot yield to the suggestions of humanity without manifest

⁹ These resolutions are printed in American State Papers, Miscellaneous, I, 464.

¹⁰ Archibald Alexander, "A History of Colonization on the West Coast of Africa" (Philadelphia, 1846), 75-76; *Niles' Register*, XI, 275, 296; James Mercer Garnett, "Biographical Sketch of Charles Fenton Mercer" (Richmond, Va., 1911), 15.

injury to their country." He held that the rapidly increasing free black population endangered the peace of the State and impaired in a large section the value of slave property. What banditti, consisting of the degraded, idle, and vicious free blacks, "sally forth from their coverts, beneath the obscurity of night, and plunder the rich proprietors of the valleys. They infest the suburbs of the towns and cities, where they become the depositories of stolen goods, and, schooled by necessity, elude the vigilance of our defective police."¹² Thus a Virginia slaveholder saw in Negro colonization a means to relieve the State of a dangerous population, to increase the value of slave property and to make possible manumission by that class of slaveholders in which he put himself.

A concurrent expression on Negro deportation, but apparently an independent one, is connected with the name of Robert Finley, of Basking Ridge, New Jersey. A graduate of Princeton, a teacher, a Presbyterian pastor, Finley was in 1816 made president of the University of Georgia, at Athens, where he died the following year at the age of forty-five. As early as 1814 he wrote "a very particular friend in Philadelphia" his ideas on Negro colonization.¹³ On February 15, 1815, he wrote a letter to John O. Mumford, of New York City, in which he argued for the removal of the free blacks. He said in part: "Everything connected with their condition, including their color, is against them; nor is there much prospect that their state can ever be greatly ameliorated, while they shall continue among us. Could not the rich and benevolent devise means to form a colony on some part of the Coast of Africa, similar to the one at Sierra Leone, which might gradually induce many free blacks to go

¹¹ Mercer's resolutions were passed by the House of Delegates, December 14, 1816, passed with amendment by the Senate, December 20, and concurred in by the House, December 21. *Annals of Congress*, 15th Congress, 1st session, II, 1774. Indiana, Georgia and Tennessee, all a little later, passed similar resolutions. *American Quarterly*, IV, 397.

¹² American Colonization Society, First Annual Report, 8.

¹³ Isaac V. Brown, "Biography of the Reverend Robert Finley, of Basking Ridge, N. J." (Philadelphia, 1857), 60.

there and settle, devising for them the means of getting there, and of protection and support till they were established? Ought not Congress to be petitioned to grant them a district in a good climate, say on the shores of the Pacific Ocean? Our fathers brought them here, and we are bound if possible to repair the injuries inflicted by our fathers. Could they be sent to Africa, a three-fold benefit would arise. We should be cleared of them; we should send to Africa a population partially civilized and christianized for its benefits; our blacks themselves would be put in better condition. Think much on this subject, then please write me again when you have leisure." ¹⁴

Reverend Mr. Finley participated in a colonization meeting held in Princeton, New Jersey, November 6, 1816, which drew up a memorial urging the legislature to use its influence in securing the adoption of some deportation scheme by Congress. The memorialists recognized that many slaves had been emancipated; that the same principles that prompted past manumissions would gradually effect the freedom of all others; that freedmen should be able "to rise to that condition to which they are entitled by the laws of God and nature"; therefore, they should be separated from the whites and placed in a favorable situation, possibly Africa.¹⁵

A third concurrent manifestation of colonization activity is connected with the name of Samuel J. Mills, whose indefatigable energy and unselfish devotion to all causes missionary are scarcely paralleled in history. Whether as an undergraduate at Williams College or as a graduate student at Yale or Andover Theological Seminary, he was feverishly

¹⁴ Printed in Brown, *Finley*, 60, 61. See also *African Repository*, II, 2, 3, and Matthew Carey, "Letters on Colonization and its Probable Results addressed to C. F. Mercer," Philadelphia, 1834, 7.

¹⁵ *Niles' Register*, XI, 260. Colonel Ercuries Beatty president at the meeting. The committee appointed to secure signatures to the memorial consisted of the following names: Elisha Clark, John G. Schenck, Dr. E. Stockton, Dr. J. Van Cleve, and Robert Voorhees. Byron Sunderland in his "Liberian Colonization," *Liberian Bulletin*, No. 16, 18, says this meeting was virtually a failure. The memorial may be found in the Cuffe manuscripts. It was sent to Paul Cuffe by Robert Finley when the latter was in Washington seeking to bring about some general deportation movement.

active in projecting plans for Christian missionary work. His mother said: "I have consecrated this child to the service of God as a missionary,"¹⁶ and surely he was faithful to death to this dedication. He was the leader of the Society of Inquiry Respecting Missions, founded in 1810, an organization which favored African colonization.¹⁷ As soon as his college work was over he made a missionary tour through the Middle West and South, under the auspices of the Society for Propagating the Gospel,¹⁸ and in 1814-15 he made a second tour.¹⁹ He is credited with having originated the American Bible Society, the United Foreign Missionary Society, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He took a deep interest in the movement which about this time sent men to India, Ceylon, the Sandwich Islands, and to the various tribes of the American Indians. He had a hand in the formation of the Foreign Mission school at Cornwall, Connecticut, and the establishment of the African School at Parsippany, New Jersey, is directly attributed to him.

When Mills made his tour through the West and South he not only preached the Gospel and distributed Bibles, he studied the condition of the Negro as well. "We must save the Negroes or the Negroes will ruin us," he concluded. He was convinced that if some disposition could be made of the free Negroes, many slaveholders would gladly emancipate their slaves. With this in view, he sought to procure a district in Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois where the blacks might be colonized. In this way he could test his principle and develop leaders for a more extended settlement in the far West or in Africa.²⁰ This plan did not mature, but he continued to recommend emigration both to the blacks and whites and

¹⁶ Gardiner Spring, "Memoir of Samuel John Mills" (Boston and New York, 1829), 10.

¹⁷ Sunderland, "Liberian Colonization," *Liberian Bulletin*, No. 16, 18.

¹⁸ Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections, Second Series, II, 1.

¹⁹ Report of a missionary tour through that part of the United States which lies west of the Allegheny Mountains (Andover, 1815).

²⁰ Thomas C. Richards, "Samuel J. Mills, Missionary, Pathfinder, Pioneer and Promoter" (Boston, 1906), 190, 191; Spring, "Memoir of Mills," 129.

to provide for the training of Negro teachers and preachers. The young missionary established a school under the care of the synod of New York and New Jersey at Parsippany in the latter state, which was to "qualify young men of color for teachers of schools and preachers of the gospel, in hope of exerting an influence in correcting morals and manners of their brethren in cities and large towns; and also to raise up teachers for these people, should an effort be made to settle them by themselves, either in this country or abroad." Some gave to aid the school as an auxiliary to the colonization effort, who would not have given, had not that view been presented. "I am confident," Mills wrote (in 1817), "that the people of color now in this country, that is, many of them, will be settled by themselves, either in this country or abroad. The teachers who may be raised up will promote this object. Whether they remain in this country or not, much must be done to qualify them for living in society by themselves."²¹

One of the earliest movements in which an effort was made to adopt some particular plan of operation was at Georgetown, District of Columbia, in March, 1816. The meeting was called by a resident of Georgetown, then a little village, and several citizens of the neighboring States were present and took part in the discussion.²²

Other expressions favorable to the deportation of Negroes were made about this time. At a meeting in Greene County, Tennessee, composed of delegates of the Manumission Society, emancipation was recommended "and if thought best, that a colony be laid off for their reception as they become free."²³ Dr. Jesse Torrey, Jr., a physician, writing a few days before the passage of the Virginia resolutions, advocated the transfer of the Negroes to some dis-

²¹ Spring, "Memoir of Mills," 125, 126; *African Repository*, I, 276. A school based on these principles was established in New York also, in October, 1816. While the above quotation was written by Mills in July, 1817, it is a fair representation of his idea for several years previous.

²² An editorial in the *North American Review*, XXXV, 126

²³ *Niles' Register*, XIV, 321. Thomas Doan, Aaron Coppock, James Boyd, Joseph Coin, and Elihu Embree signed such a statement.

tant American Territory. He thought, since Congress had done nothing toward such a movement, public subscriptions from beneficent societies and individuals should be solicited with which to purchase a suitable site for a colony and meet the expense of transportation.²⁴ Hezekiah Niles, the great compiler, said he had thought on colonization from his youth up.²⁵ An editorial in a Georgia newspaper dated January 1, 1817, said deportation was seriously agitated in different parts of the country. The Georgia editor believed that free blacks were dangerous to the welfare of society and that the gradual reduction of the number of slaves was imperative to the public good. "We must choose between our own destruction and general emancipation," said the Georgian. "If the government will find means of conveying out of the country such slaves as may be emancipated and would likewise purchase annually a certain number, particularly females for transportation, it is believed our black population would soon become harmless if not extinct. To the importance of such an object, the expense will bear no comparison; and a more favorable period than at present for its accomplishment can scarcely be expected."²⁶

The Georgia editor was right. On the very day that his editorial went to press, a representative body of men were in conference on this subject at Washington city; and as a result of their deliberation the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States (later known as the American Colonization Society) was organized. The leading advocates of Negro deportation looked to the city of Washington as the strategic place to advance their cause. The earliest arrival was Robert Finley, who reached the capital about the beginning of the month of December,

²⁴ Jesse Torrey, Jr., "A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery, in the United States: with Reflections on the Practicability of Restoring the Moral Rights of the Slave, without Impairing the Legal Privileges of the Possessor; and a Project of a Colonial Asylum for Free Persons of Colour: including Memoirs of Facts on the Interior Traffic in Slaves, and on Kidnapping" (Philadelphia, 1817), 27-30.

²⁵ *Niles' Register*, XIII, 180.

²⁶ "Documentary History of American Industrial Society," II, 157, 158.

1816. He had spent the greater part of the fall maturing plans for bringing the cause before the people. It is highly probable that he knew nothing about the plans of other advocates nor of the action of the Virginia Assembly. Upon his arrival at Washington he immediately began to call on Congressmen, the Cabinet officials, the President, and, in fact, on any one whom he could interest.²⁷

Finley was in communication with Paul Cuffe, the only practical colonizationist in America. His expeditions to Africa and England, and especially the transportation of Negroes to Sierra Leone, in 1815, were noted in the press as far west as Louisville, Kentucky,²⁸ and those interested in further efforts along this line were in touch with him. Samuel C. Aiken, of Andover, had written him on July 23, 1816, and Jedekiah Morse four days later.²⁹ Finley wrote Cuffe, December 5, on the back of the printed memorial to the New Jersey Legislature, undoubtedly the work of the Princeton meeting of the previous November, for information about Sierra Leone, information to be used by him and others interested in the free people of color. He also asked if Cuffe thought some other part of Africa more desirable for a settlement than Sierra Leone and stated that "the great desire of those whose minds are impressed with this subject is to give an opportunity to the free people of color to rise to their proper level and at the same time to provide a powerful means of putting an end to the slave trade and sending civilization and Christianity to Africa."³⁰ Cuffe was unable to reply to this letter before January 8. He gave Finley the information he desired and recommended in the event of a general deportation the Cape of Good Hope as a location for a settlement.³¹

²⁷ *African Repository*, I, 23.

²⁸ See the *Western Courier* (Louisville, Kentucky), for October 26, 1815.

²⁹ Paul Cuffe manuscripts in the Public Library, New Bedford, Mass. Paul Cuffe to Samuel C. Aiken, August 7, 1816; Paul Cuffe to Jedekiah Morse, August 10, 1816.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Robert Finley to Paul Cuffe, December 5, 1816, Finley asked that the reply if mailed to him at Washington be sent in care of his brother-in-law, Elias B. Caldwell.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Paul Cuffe to Robert Finley, January 8, 1817.

In a printed pamphlet, "Thoughts on the Colonization of Free Blacks," ³² which Finley wrote about this time and which he was distributing in Washington, is contained the line of argument he was using. He said: "At present, as if by divine impulse, men of virtue, piety, and reflection, are turning their thoughts to this subject, and seem to see the wished-for plan unfolding, in the gradual separation of the black from the white population, by providing for the former, some suitable situation, where men may enjoy the advantages to which they are entitled by nature and their Creator's will." He argued for the practicability of establishing a colony either in the "Wild Lands" of America or in Africa, but he thought Africa the more desirable as this location would prevent conflicts with the remaining slave population, and avoid foreign intrigues. He held that Africa had the advantage of being the real home of the Negro, of having the existing settlements in Sierra Leone formed by English philanthropists and by Paul Cuffe. On the other hand, requiring explorations, diplomatic negotiations and great expense, it offered greater obstacles than a location within America. But Finley was not disheartened, believing, as he did, in the justice of the cause and in the wisdom of Congress to devise some means to lighten, perhaps to repay, the cost. He continued by saying: "Many of the free people of color have property sufficient to transport, and afterward to establish themselves. The ships of war might be employed occasionally in this service, while many Negroes themselves could be induced to procure a passage to the land of their independence. The crews of the national ships which might be from time to time at the colony, would furnish at least a part of that protection which would be necessary for the settlers; and in a little time the trade which the colony would open with the interior, would more than compensate for every expense, if the colony were wisely formed." The Negroes, Finley thought, would gladly go, for they long after happiness and have the common pride

³² Printed in Brown, *Finley*, 66 ff. The pamphlet was written before he came to Washington.

and feelings of men. Already, he pointed out, an association of free blacks existed in Philadelphia whose purpose was to correspond with Sierra Leone and investigate the possibilities of an immigration. Finley held that colonization would gradually reduce slavery, because provision being made for the emancipated slaves, masters would manumit them.

Samuel J. Mills, "having been providentially made acquainted" ³³ with this movement, about the close of November left New York, where he was working among the poor, immediately for Washington. What he, as well as the other workers, did there, is pretty well indicated by Congressman Elijah J. Mills of Massachusetts in a letter to his wife, under date of December 25: "Among the great and important objects to which our attention is called, a project is lately started for settling, with free blacks which abound in the South and West, a colony, either on the coast of Africa, or in some remote region in our own country. It has excited great interest, and I am inclined to think that in the course of a few years it will be carried into effect. I enclose you an address which is in circulation here upon the subject. Agents are attending from different parts of the United States, soliciting Congress to take the subject up immediately, and I was this morning called upon by a Mr. Mills (a young clergyman who was at New Orleans with Smith), who is very zealously engaged in the work. He is an intelligent young man, and appears completely devoted to the great work of diffusing the blessings of Christianity to those who are ignorant of it." ³⁴

The first general conference that the colonization workers had in Washington was in the nature of a "prayer meeting" ³⁵ held in the home of Elias B. Caldwell, a brother-

³³ Spring, "Memoir of Mills," 131.

³⁴ Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, First Series, XIX, 20.

³⁵ *African Repository*, I, 2, 3. Referring to Caldwell in an address at an annual meeting of the Society, January 20, 1827, Clay said: "It is now a little upwards of ten years since a religious, amiable and benevolent resident of this city, first conceived the idea of planting a colony, from the United States, of free people of color, on the western shores of Africa. He is no more, and the

in-law of Finley, clerk of the United States Supreme Court, and afterward secretary of the American Colonization Society. This meeting, which both Mills and Finley attended, was "for the purpose of imploring the divine direction, on the evening of the following day, when the expediency of forming a Colonization Society was to be publicly discussed."³⁶ The enthusiasm of Finley at this time was almost boundless; he would give five hundred dollars of his own scanty means to insure its success; when some, thinking the project foolhardy, laughed at it, he declared, "I know the scheme is from God."³⁷ The efficacy of prayer bore the traditional fruit, for whereas persons "were brought there from curiosity, or by the solicitation of their friends, viewing the scheme as too chimerical for any national being to undertake [nevertheless] a great change"³⁸ was produced on them.

According to their plans, Congressman Charles Marsh, of Vermont, having made the necessary arrangements,³⁹ the colonizationists held on the next evening, December 21, 1816, in the Davis Hotel, a public meeting, attended by citizens of Washington, Georgetown, Alexandria, and other parts of the country. Among the men of note present, not heretofore mentioned, were Henry Clay, Francis S. Key, Bishop William Meade, John Randolph, and Judge Bushrod Washington.⁴⁰ Niles reports the attendance "numerous and respectable, and its proceedings fraught with interest."⁴¹ The avowed object of the meeting was for the

noblest eulogy that could be pronounced on him would be to inscribe upon his tomb, the merited epitaph, 'Here lies the projector of the American Colonization Society.'" Clay was historically mistaken. Similar things were said of Mills and Finley. This speech may be found in pamphlet form in the Library of the Ohio Historical and Philosophical Society.

³⁶ Spring, "Memoir of Mills," 131, 139, 140.

³⁷ Brown, *Finley*, 65, 66.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, "A Respectable Resident of the District of Columbia to Brown," 64, 65.

³⁹ Sunderland, "Liberian Colonization," *Liberian Bulletin*, No. 16, 19.

⁴⁰ Virginia Historical Society, Collections, VI, 26; *Niles' Register*, XI, 296.

⁴¹ *Niles' Register*, XI, 296.

“purpose of considering the expediency and practicability of ameliorating the condition of the Free People of Color now in the United States, by providing a Colonial Retreat, either on this continent or that of Africa.”⁴²

Henry Clay, the chairman of the meeting, pointed out in his remarks that no attempt was being made “to touch or agitate in the slightest degree, a delicate question, connected with another portion of the colored population of this country. It was not proposed to deliberate upon or consider at all, any question of emancipation, or that which was connected with the abolition of slavery. It was upon that condition alone he was sure, that many gentlemen from the South and West, whom he saw present, had attended, or could be expected to cooperate. It was upon that condition only that he himself had attended.”⁴³

The principal address was delivered by Elias B. Caldwell, the Princeton schoolmate of Charles Fenton Mercer. He argued for the expediency and practicability of African colonization. It was expedient because the free blacks have a demoralizing influence on our civil institutions; they can never enjoy equality among the whites in America; only in a district by themselves will they ever be happy. To colonize them in America would invite the possibility of their making common cause with the Indians and border nations, and furnish an asylum for fugitives and runaway slaves. Africa seemed the best place to send them: there was a settlement already in Sierra Leone, the climate was agreeable to the colored man's constitution, they could live cheaply there, and above all other reasons, they could carry civilization and Christianity to the Africans. While the expense would be greater than that connected with a settlement on the Ameri-

⁴² Manuscript Record of the Meeting, Library of Congress. Copy furnished by the American Colonization Society.

⁴³ The *National Intelligencer* reported the meeting. The substance of Clay's remarks is printed in Archibald Alexander, “A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa” (Philadelphia, 1849), 77-82; in J. Tracy, “A View of Exertions Lately Made for the Purpose of Colonizing the Free People of Color in the United States, in Africa, or Elsewhere” (Washington, 1817), 4 ff.

can Continent yet, in order to make atonement for the wrongs done Africa, America should contribute to this object both from the treasury of the national government and from the purse of private individuals. With the promise of equality, a homestead, and a free passage, no black would refuse to go. In concluding his speech he said: "It is for us to make the experiment and the offers; we shall then, and not till then, have discharged our duty. It is a plan in which all interests, all classes, and descriptions of people may unite, in which all discordant feelings may be lost in those of humanity, in promoting 'peace on earth and good will to man.'" ⁴⁴

Robert Wright of Maryland, having pointed out some difficulties, gave colonization his approbation with the hope that there would arise for gradual emancipation some plan in which slaves would be prepared for freedom, and slaveholders would be remunerated out of the funds of the nation. ⁴⁵

It appeared to John Randolph of Roanoke that "it had not been sufficiently insisted on with a view to obtain the cooperation of all the citizens of the United States, not only that this meeting does not in any wise affect the question of Negro Slavery, but, as far as it goes, must materially tend to secure the property of every master in the United States over his slaves." He considered the free black "a great evil," "a nuisance," and "a bug-bear to every man who feels an inclination to emancipate his slaves." "If a place could be provided for their reception," said Randolph, "and a mode of sending them hence, there were [sic] hundreds, nay thousands of citizens" who would manumit their slaves. ⁴⁶ Randolph's characterization of the free black was generally approved by the leaders in this movement. Caldwell used "degraded" and "ignorant" in describing this class of people. Mills said: "It

⁴⁴ Alexander, "A History of Colonization," 82-87; Tracy, "A View of Exertions," 4-11. For a criticism of all the speeches before this meeting see David Walker, "An Appeal" (Boston, 1830), 50 ff.

⁴⁵ Torrey, "A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery," 69.

⁴⁶ Torrey, "A View of Exertions," 9, 10; Walker, "Appeal," 57.

will transfer to the coast of Africa the blessings of religion and civilization; and Ethiopia will soon stretch out her hands to God.”⁴⁷

One finds it difficult to explain how the colonizationists could argue that one of their objects was to remove a dangerous element from our population and at the same time take civilization and Christianity to Africa. No doubt it was expected that the Negroes who attended the schools, established principally by Mills, would become efficient leaders of their fellows. It is highly probable also that the arguments were designed for different sections of the country and different classes of people—to remove the dangerous element would make a strong appeal to the slaveholder and the South, for it was believed that the free black contaminated and ruined the slave; to civilize and Christianize Africa would appeal to churchmen and religious bodies, and this argument could be used in the North. To return to Africa people who could contribute to her betterment; indeed, to return to Africa the descendants of her enslaved sons and daughters improved by contact with the civilization of the whites would be a recompense to that continent for the wrongs perpetrated, during a period of two hundred years, on her population. It was only America’s moral obligation, said the colonizationists, to return the black population to Africa.

Another object the deportationists had in mind was to stop the slave trade. They believed that the existence of a settlement in Africa would deter the slaveholder from securing his cargo in human beings. It would also furnish the opportunity needed to develop a commerce in legitimate articles of trade between Africa and America and other parts of the world. It was also hoped by the leaders of this deportation movement to remove the great obstacle to the abolition of slavery. Now that provision was made for the freedmen the slaveholder felt at liberty to manumit his slaves. To quote Mills again: “It is confidently be-

⁴⁷ Spring, “Memoir of Mills, Samuel J. Mills to Ebenezer Burgess,” July 30, 1817, 136.

lieved by many of our best and wisest men, that, if the plan proposed succeeds, it will ultimately be the means of exterminating slavery in our country.”⁴⁸

The charge was made later, especially by the Abolitionists, that the movement was a deeply laid device for making slavery more secure than ever. They took great delight in referring to Randolph’s remark, made at the first public meeting of the deportationists, that colonization would tend “to secure the property of every master in the United States over his slaves.” Subsequently the management of the Society itself recognized the force of this remark as a quotation from the eighty-second report will show: “It was this ill-omened utterance of a solitary member of the Society, who appears to have taken very little if any part in its subsequent proceedings, that afterward gave the impracticable abolitionists a text for the most vituperative and persistent assaults upon the Society and its purpose.”⁴⁹ Randolph’s remark is not only qualified by the fact that he took “very little if any part in its subsequent proceedings” but also by his prediction that thousands of slaveholders, when assured of a place to send the Negroes, would emancipate their slaves because they would then be relieved from their care. With all this, however, Randolph claimed the colonization movement had nothing to do with abolition.

And it must also be remembered that the eccentric Randolph was only one man among a large group of men who were interested in the deportation movement. In this large group two, Mills and Finley, religious patriots, stand head and shoulders above all the others, both of whom, Mills, particularly, hoped to provide a method for the abolition of slavery. Moreover, the Abolitionists should have observed that the name of Daniel Webster appeared among the signers of the constitution as well as the name of Ferdinando Fairfax⁵⁰ and especially that of William Thorton.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁹ American Colonization Society, Eighty-second report, 7.

⁵⁰ See the *American Museum*, December, 1790, 285–286, for his plan.

⁵¹ Thorton’s activities have been related by H. N. Sherwood, “Early Negro

Fairfax and Thorton were excellent representatives of deportation schemes, proposed in the eighteenth century and deliberately designed to remove from our country all Negroes both free and slave. It seems, therefore, safe to conclude that the colonization movement of 1816-17 was at that time sincere in its purpose and straightforward in its aims.

Therefore with humanitarian aims the colonizationists at their first public meeting, December 21, 1816, passed resolutions favorable to the formation of an association for the purpose of deporting the free blacks to Africa or elsewhere, and appointed a committee to draw up and present a memorial to Congress requesting measures for securing a suitable territory for a settlement, and another committee to prepare a constitution and rules to govern the association when formed.⁵² Having taken this action, they decided to adjourn until the following Saturday, December 28, at six o'clock.

According to this arrangement "citizens of Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria, and many others" met in the Hall of the House of Representatives of the United States and adopted a Constitution.⁵³ By provision of the Constitution the Association was "The American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States" and its exclusive object "to promote and execute a plan for colonizing (with their consent) the Free People of Color residing in our Country, in Africa, or such other

Deportation Projects," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, March, 1916, 502-505.

⁵² The committee for the memorial consisted of: E. B. Caldwell, John Randolph, Richard Rush, Walter Jones, Francis S. Key, Robert Wright, James H. Blake and John Peter. The committee for the Constitution: Francis S. Key, Bushrod Washington, E. B. Caldwell, James Breckenridge, Walter Jones, Richard Rush, and W. G. D. Worthington.

⁵³ Mills wrote Cuffe, December 26, 1816, informing him of the activities in Washington and asked for information about Africa. He added a postscript: "If the general government were to request you to go out for the purpose of exploring in your own vessel would you engage in this service if offered proper support?" Cuffe Manuscripts, Samuel J. Mills to Paul Cuffe, December 26, 1916.

place as Congress shall deem most expedient." Every citizen of the United States was eligible to membership upon the payment of one dollar, the annual dues, or as amended a few days later, thirty dollars for life membership. Provision was made for the usual officers and for the formation of auxiliary societies to this parent organization.⁵⁴ The first annual meeting was fixed for Wednesday, January 1, 1817.

On this date the colonizationists met in Davis's Hotel, Henry Clay again presiding. Bushrod Washington was elected President of the Society, equally noted men were chosen for the other officers,⁵⁵ and on motion of the Hon-

⁵⁴ The signers of this Constitution are given by Sunderland, "Liberian Colonization," *Liberian Bulletin*, No. 16, 20, as follows:

Signers of American Colonization Society, December 28, 1816.

H. Clay	Jno. Loockerman	John Taylor
E. B. Caldwell	Jno. Woodside	Overton Carr
Thos. Dougherty	Wm. Dudley Diggs	P. H. Wendover
Stephen B. Balch	Thos. Carberry	F. S. Key
Jno. Chambers, Jr.	Samuel J. Mills	Charles Marsh
Thos. Patterson	Geo. A. Carroll	David M. Forest
John Randolph of Roanoke	W. G. D. Worthington	John Wiley
Rob't H. Goldsborough	John Lee	Nathan Lufborough
Wm. Thornton	Richard Bland Lee	William Meade
George Clark	D. Murray	William H. Wilmer
James Laurie	Robert Finley	Geo. Travers
J. T. Stull	B. Allison	Edm. I. Lee
Dan'l Webster	B. L. Lear	John P. Todd
J. C. Herbert	W. Jones	Bushrod Washington
Wm. Simmons	J. Mason	
E. Forman	Mord. Booth	
Ferdinand Fairfax	J. S. Shaaf	
V. Maxsy	Geo. Peter	

⁵⁵ The other officers were as follows:

William H. Crawford of Georgia
 Henry Clay of Kentucky
 William Phillips of Massachusetts
 Col. Henry Rutgers of New York
 John E. Howard
 Samuel Smith
 John C. Herbert } of Maryland
 John Taylor of Caroline, of Virginia
 Andrew Jackson of Tennessee

orable John C. Herbert of Maryland, Reverend Robert Finley was "requested to close the meeting with an address to the Throne of Grace" ⁵⁶ which he did, it being "his last public act in the last public meeting" ⁵⁷ for the organization and success of the American Colonization Society.

HENRY NOBLE SHERWOOD, PH.D.

STATE NORMAL SCHOOL,
LA CROSSE, WIS.

Robert Ralston } of Pennsylvania
Richard Rush }
John Mason of the District of Columbia
Robert Finley of New Jersey

These were the thirteen vice presidents.

Elias B. Caldwell, Secretary
William G. D. Worthington, Recorder
David English, Treasurer

Francis S. Key
Walter Jones
John Laird
Rev. Dr. James Laurie
Rev. Stephen B. Balch
Rev. Obadiah B. Brown
James H. Blake
John Peter
Edmund I. Lee
William Thorton
Jacob Hoffman
Henry Carroll

These composed the Board of Managers.

⁵⁶ Manuscript Records of the Meeting.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Finley*, 65, 66.